

Veterans and Nature Funding Opportunity

Request for Proposals

2026





2026 Veterans and Nature Grant Request for Proposals

The National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF) is pleased to announce grant funding supported by the American Medical Association (AMA) to expand access to nature-based experiences that support the health, well-being, and community connection of America's veterans. AMA has partnered with NEEF to bring an evidence-based health perspective to this effort, underscoring the growing body of research linking time in nature to improved physical and mental health outcomes.

NEEF invites eligible organizations to apply for funding to develop and scale programs that connect veterans to nature and to one another on America's public lands.

This initiative is also made possible through the generous support of Leidos, an organization deeply committed to the health and readiness of military communities.

Background

A [Pew Research Center survey](#) found that roughly one in four veterans say the transition back to civilian life was at least somewhat difficult. This is especially true for those who return home with stress or trauma. The National Alliance on Mental Illness estimates [11-20%](#) of veterans are believed to experience post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) each year.

Nature offers profound restorative benefits for veterans navigating the challenges of post-service life. Time spent outdoors — whether hiking, fishing, camping, or simply sitting among trees — has been shown by [numerous studies](#) to reduce symptoms of PTSD, anxiety, and depression, conditions that affect veterans at disproportionately high rates.

Quieting hypervigilance, allowing space for reflection, fostering camaraderie, and reducing isolation are all mental and physical benefits that be found through outdoor recreation. Using America's public lands to do so provides a powerful and accessible path forward.

Overview

Through the 2026 Veterans and Nature grant, NEEF aims to expand access to nature-based experiences that support veteran health, well-being, and community connection by

- Providing **opportunities** for outdoor activities on public land that improve the physical and mental health of veterans
- Increasing veterans' **understanding** of the physical and mental health benefits of time in nature

The grant will provide up to \$10,000 per grantee for projects on federal, state, local, or nonprofit public lands that address physical and mental health in veteran communities.



Examples of project types include outdoor activities, such as hiking, biking, climbing, or fishing; wellness activities, such as forest bathing or meditation; environmental education, such as community science; adaptive programming; and conservation volunteering. Projects are not limited to those listed here.

See previous Veterans and Nature grant projects: <https://www.neefusa.org/what-we-do/grants/grantees/veterans-and-nature-grant-program>

For the purposes of this grant, a veteran is defined as any person who served on active duty in the US Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, Navy or Space Force and was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable. Individuals who served in the Reserves or National Guard qualify as veterans if they were activated by federal order for purposes other than training.

Active-duty service members and veterans' friends and families are welcome to participate in proposed projects, but the intent of the project is to primarily serve veterans. Strong proposals will focus on veterans' health and well-being.

Eligibility

- Open to 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations, federal, state, or local government agencies, and federally recognized tribes.
- Nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations must provide a partnership letter from the public land site they work with if they are not the managing entity of that public land site.
- Federal government agencies are required to work with a 501(c)(3) nonprofit partner to administer funds.

*Private, for-profit firms and individuals **are not eligible** to apply. Grant funding **may not be used** to support political advocacy, fundraising, lobbying, litigation, terrorist activities, or Foreign Corrupt Practices Act violations.*

Project Criteria

- Project must provide *opportunities* for physical and/or mental health focused outdoor activities for veterans while also increasing veterans' *understanding* of the benefits of time spent in nature.
- Project must take place on public land, which, for the purposes of this RFP, is defined as any federal, state, local, or regional land or waterway accessible to the public for the purposes of recreation. This may also include nonprofit-managed public lands if the primary mission of the organization is conservation and recreation on that land.
- Project must be completed within a 12-month grant period.
- Project must include veterans in the planning and implementation of the project, such as consulting volunteers or partnering with veteran's groups to promote events.



Application

Applicants will be asked to address the following in the application.

- Project Description
- Project Area
- Project Timeline
- Project Team
- Marketing and Outreach Plan
- Post-Grant Plans
- Program Goals
- Letter of Support (Optional, but strongly encouraged)
- Project budget (must use budget template provided in the application)
- Organization or Fiscal Sponsor's Financial Information

NEEF encourages applicants to create an account in [NEEF's grant portal](#) to view the full application before deciding whether to apply. Applications are only accepted through NEEF's grant portal.

NEEF's Grant Frequently Asked Questions page can be helpful for general questions about the application process. <https://www.neefusa.org/grants/neef-grant-glossary-and-faqs>

Timeline

The approximate timeline for grant application, review, and implementation is:

- Application opens: May 5, 2026
- Application deadline: June 10, 2026, 11:59 PT
- Grants awarded: July 2026
- Period of performance: August 2026 to July 2027
- Interim report due: February 2027
- Final report due: July 2027

Expectations If Funded

Reporting

Grantees will be required to turn in an interim report and a final report via NEEF's grants portal. Throughout the grant period, grantees may be asked for periodic updates or photos.

If selected, all grantees must be able to collect and report on relevant key performance indicators (KPIs), including:

- Number of Events/Activities
- Number of Participants Who Are Veterans



- Total Number of Participants (including participants other than veterans, such as family members)
- Total Program Hours
- Project Partners

If selected, grantees whose project includes a conservation volunteer component must be able to collect and report on relevant KPIs, including:

- Square footage affected by the project
- Estimated amount of invasive species removed
- Estimated amount of trash removed
- Estimated number of native trees and plants planted
- Estimated miles of trail restored or maintained
- Estimated miles of waterway restored or maintained

All grantees will be asked narrative questions to describe how their project reached the desired outcomes of the grant. Outcomes include:

- Increased sense of physical and mental well-being of veterans as a result of the activity.
- Increased intent to return to the public lands site as a result of the activity.
- Increased knowledge of veterans in understanding the physical and mental health benefits of time in nature.
- Increased confidence of veterans in accessing public lands.
- Increased sense of connection of veterans with other members of the community.

All grantees will be asked to provide participants with a post-program survey. This survey will be provided by NEEF and collected electronically.

KPIs and outcomes are subject to change, but will be available for viewing when the period of performance begins.

Meetings

Grantees will be expected to participate in periodic virtual meetings with NEEF. This includes an orientation presentation at the beginning of the period of performance and grantee summit mid-way through the grant period.

Publicity

Grantee is required to acknowledge NEEF and the funding partner in all advertising and published material related to the funded activity, which includes, but is not limited to websites, articles, publications, presentations, brochures, newsletters, blogs, social media, education materials, print advertising, or other discussion of this project by the grantee.



Grantees are expected to submit at least three high-quality photos and make two social media posts related to the project.

Contact

Please contact grants@NEEFusa.org for all questions regarding this grant or the grant portal.